

Laos in the Vietnam War: The Politics of Escalation, 1960-1973

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Abstract

The land locked and underdeveloped country of Laos presents a scenario in early 1960s that almost brought the world on the brink of a major war. Compared to the contemporaneous Berlin Wall Crisis and Cuban Missile crisis, the events in Laos had been pushed back by scholars without it receiving much attention. The Lao imbroglio was accentuated after the escalation of conflict in Vietnam, when Laos became a side show of the Vietnamese conflict. When the two superpowers, the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) confronted each other in Laos, there was a serious international crisis. The present paper would explore ramifications of the crisis in Laos in the context of Cold War. It would analyze factors responsible for escalating the crisis and defusing of it afterwards. The role of superpowers, great powers, and regional powers would be discussed with their interests and motivations. The local actors who had different considerations and their response to the ongoing crisis would also to be projected. The internationalization of the crisis, particularly after it was linked with Vietnam War, aggravated the problem in Laos resulting in a delay in finding a solution to problem in Laos.

Introduction

During World War II, the Japanese took control of Laos and declared its independence from the French colonial rule on March 9, 1945. After surrender of the Japanese, Phetsarat established the independent *Lao Issara* (Free Laos) Government on September 1. New avenues opened for the Lao elite to chart out a course of independence. The *Lao Issara* was short-lived and the French began to re-conquer its colonial Empire of Indochina. Laos was soon engulfed in the First Indochina War (1946-1954) and the French granted limited independence on July 19, 1949. The developments in Laos were viewed differently by political groups. The three major strands in Laos; Pathet Lao, neutralists and the rightists became a constant feature of Lao politics afterwards. The left leaning Pathet Lao (land of Lao) vociferously opposed the French move, whereas Souvanna Phouma joined the new RLG (Royal Lao Government) formed in February 1950. The term, Pathet Lao is generally used for the Communist movement of Laos that began in 1945 and continued until 1975, when whole of Laos became Communist. It fought along with the Viet Minh and Khmer Rouge in the First Indochina War against the French. The three communist factions of Indochina had formed the Viet-Khmer-Lao alliance on 11 March 1951. The collapse of Dien Bien Phu on 7 May, 1954 ended the

French colonial rule in Indochina and the next day, the Indochinese session of Geneva Conference began. The Pathet Lao was recognized as a political party with control over Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces. It began to consolidate its position by revamping its organizational structure and taking part in coalition Governments. The Geneva Conference of 1954 had not solved the problem. There was formation of national union Government after the signing of the Vientiane Agreements of 1956-1957 between the Pathet Lao and RLG. But the politics of the country turned towards extreme right. In December 1959, the military dominated Government of General Phoumi Nosavan arrested the Pathet Lao members of the National Assembly. Laos was heading towards a crisis point in the context of cold war. Peace became illusive and Laos was plunged into civil war in 1960s.

Actors in the Conflict

The situation in Laos was exacerbated by involvement of external powers, which aggravated the conflict. The actors involved viewed the situation in Laos from their standpoint. The crisis escalated or de-escalated according to interest of superpowers, great powers and the neighboring countries. The USA and the then North Vietnam were major actors in Lao scenario, developing a patron-client relationship with the RLG and the Pathet Lao respectively. The US administration saw the situation as part of communist drive for world domination. Laos was included in the containment strategy as first line of defense against North Vietnam and China. The American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles had called Laos as "outpost of free world" ¹ and said the day after Geneva Conference began:

*Whether this can be stopped at this point, and whether Laos, Cambodia and southern part of Vietnam, Thailand, Malaya, and Indonesia can be kept out of Communist control depends very much on whether we can build a dike around the present loss.*²

Another factor in the involvement of Laos had been Thailand, which was judging the American commitment to it by the steps that Washington was taking against spread of Communism in Laos.³ The US supported the leaders of Laos, who would best serve its interest. It strengthened the RLG by massive military and economic aid. Laos became the only country in the world, whose military budget was being supported by the US. A special Protocol added Laos to be protected by the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) of September 6, 1954. The Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG) could not be sent to Laos under the terms of the Geneva agreements and therefore, a Program Evaluation Office (PEO) was established. It was a military mission staffed by the US armed forces, whose military ranks were removed temporarily.⁴ The PEO also was controlling the 25, 000 strong Royal Lao Army (RLA), which was receiving eighty percent of total American aid to Laos. It was the State Department, which was in favor of supporting the RLA's entire military budget and the Joint Chiefs of Staff was of the opinion that military considerations were not taken into account.⁵ In the crisis of Laos, it would be seen afterwards that different departments of the US Administration were not

unanimous in opinion as to the policy to be followed. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) helped in formation of a rightist grouping, Committee for Defense of National Interests (CDNI) on June 17, 1958.⁶ Its aim was combating communism in Laos and the CIA backed the rightist politician, General Phoumi. The CIA advisor John Hazey was very close to him.⁷ The State Department was supporting Phoui Sananikone, the Premier of Laos. But the CIA found Phoumi more pliable and it along with the PEO advised him to stage a coup. He also stage managed the elections of April 1960 and the CIA agents were distributing money to village chiefs at the time of elections.⁸ The cooperation between the Governments of US, Laos and Thailand were going on well. The American aid was passing through Thailand to land locked Laos and the US had built three new airfields in north-eastern Thailand. Both Laos and Thailand were maintaining close economic and military cooperation under the auspices of SEATO. The US was encouraging to develop close relations between Vientiane and Bangkok. Transport and communication facilities improved between the two, which was a part of the US sponsored communication network in Laos, Thailand and South Vietnam. The US also built up the clandestine army (*Armee Clandestine*, AC) consisting of the Hmong (Meo) tribals and mercenaries from Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and the Philippines. Thailand became a rear base for the American policy of containment in communism.

Hanoi's Interest in Laos

Laos was strategically vital to North Vietnam. The close collaboration between communist factions of the three Indochinese states began with the formation of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930. The leader of the Pathet Lao, Prince Souphanouvong had met the Vietnamese Communist leader Ho Chi Minh in 1945 and gained control of central Laos with the help of Vietnamese troops.⁹ The Prince along with leaders like Kaysone Phomvihan, Phoumi Vongvichit, Nouhak Phoumsavan etc had nurtured the Communist movement. Souphanouvong proclaimed the parallel Government of Pathet Lao along with its political organ, *Neo Lao Issara* (Lao Free Front) on 13 August, 1950.¹⁰ Hanoi's goal was unification of Vietnam and Ho Chi Minh had proclaimed after the Geneva Conference of 1954 that it would be achieved.¹¹ The northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, controlled by the Pathet Lao were of immense help as agents could be sent to South Vietnam through these areas. The mountain terrain adjoining these provinces of Laos and North Vietnam were suitable for guerilla warfare also. North Vietnam reacted sharply to the formation of SEATO and the American aid to South Vietnam. An independent South Vietnam would not have survived without aid from Washington and that country was "essentially the creation of United States."¹² Hanoi had realized this fact and increased support to the Communist factions of Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam. In December 1960, the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Vietnam had come into existence and Laos became more closely interlinked in Hanoi's task for reunification.

Apart from giving material help to the Pathet Lao like supply of arms and training, Hanoi was playing an important role in its organizational structure. The Pathet Lao Army (PLA) was formed with the assistance from North Vietnam. As the war engulfed in

Indochina in 1960s and 1970s, the PLA provided a supporting role to the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). Hanoi had a military mission in each of the Pathet Lao controlled provinces. There was presence of advisors from the NVA in Pathet Lao with six in each battalion, three in a company and two advisors in each platoon.¹³ The North Vietnamese also exerted a strong influence in the *Phak Pasason Lao* (People's Party of Laos) proclaimed on March 22, 1955.¹⁴ It was renamed next year as the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP). Modeled closely after the Lao Dong party of North Vietnam, the LPRP also was controlling the broad based political organization, the *Neo Lao Hak Sat* (NLHS, Lao Patriotic Front) established on January 6, 1956. Many of the LPRP men had been members of the ICP. Kaysone was the Secretary General of the LPRP, which had a Central Committee of twenty members. In May 1959, Hanoi began to give more aid to the Pathet Lao after a decision by the Lao Dong party. It also began to increase assistance to the NLF and exerted strong influence on it after formation of the People's Revolutionary Party in January 1962.

Civil War

From 1960s, Lao crisis escalated and the country was plunged into a civil war. The 1962 Geneva Accords gave temporary respite to the country. The pattern of escalatory and de-escalatory momentums continued until whole of Laos became Communist in 1975. Events moved fast in Laos after the coup of Captain Kong Lae of Second paratroop battalion on August 9, 1960. He was irked over the rampant corruption and American interference in Laos. The Pathet Lao leader Phoumi Vongvichit welcomed the coup as well as the establishment of a neutralist Government formed by Souvanna Phouma.¹⁵ Both the rightist leaders like Phoumi Nosavan and Boun Oum were opposed to it. Boun had declared that Souvanna's Government was illegal and charged that it had opened Laos to North Vietnamese aggression.¹⁶ He declared himself the Premier of Laos. The situation in Laos was becoming a three sided struggle and fighting soon broke out. To the left there was the Pathet Lao; Boun Oum-Phoumi Nosavan faction represented the right and in the center stood Souvanna with his neutralist followers. Upon internal quarrels, international rivalry was imposed. The civil war became internationalized with each side drawing external support. The different branches of the US Government had conflicting policies towards development in Laos. Winthrop G. Brown, the new ambassador to Laos, was supporting Souvanna. J. Graham Parsons, the former ambassador to Vientiane was heading the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs. He was persuading Souvanna to break off relations with the Pathet Lao and support Phoumi Nosavan. The American President Dwight David Eisenhower afterwards wrote that Parsons mission was to break off with the Pathet Lao.¹⁷ In October 1960, both the State and Defense Departments decided that Souvanna should go and suspended American aid to Laos.¹⁸ Faced with this and economic blockade by Thailand, Souvanna turned towards the Soviet Union.

Diplomatic Relations were established between Laos and the Soviet Union. Alexander N. Abramov became the first Soviet ambassador to Laos on October 13, 1960. On November 18 Souvanna and the Pathet Lao signed an agreement for formation of a coalition Government and establishment of diplomatic relations with North Vietnam and

China. This was the period of the deteriorating relationship between the Soviet Union and China. Beijing had accused Moscow that it was not doing its duties to promote world revolutions. The Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev had denied this. He wanted to have the support of North Vietnam in the Sino-Soviet rift. The Soviet Union did not want that they should be accused by Hanoi of betraying national liberation movements. Hence it gave support to the Pathet Lao. Moscow also criticized vehemently against the American policy in Laos. On August 17, 1959, it had released a lengthy document on Laos, where it blamed the US for giving military help to the RLG and interfering in internal affairs of Laos.¹⁹ The document commented that neither North Vietnam nor China was sending military equipment and personnel to Laos. Moscow backed the Government of Souvanna, which was being supported by the Pathet Lao. It began to supply rice and oil from December 4, 1960 and the Soviet planes arrived daily with these supplies.²⁰ Afterwards the Soviet Union began supplying military aid to the neutralist-Pathet Lao faction. On 11-12 December, the Russian aircraft delivered three 105 mm howitzers, three heavy mortars and ammunition to Vientiane.²¹ The airlift to the strategic Plain of Jars became a top priority for the Soviet Union with 180 sorties to Laos in between December 15, 1960 and January 3, 1961.²²

The Sino-Soviet rift was one of the major factors in determining the Chinese policy towards Laos. On April 16, 1960, the Chinese in an article entitled, *Long Live Leninism*, criticized the policy of peaceful coexistence and peaceful transition to socialism of Khrushchev.²³ As China shared over three hundred and fifty kilometers border with Laos, it viewed with concern prospect of any foreign power having a foothold in Laos. Apart from expressing concern over American military aid to the RLG, Beijing criticized SEATO for its aggressive design over China and interference in internal affairs of Laos. Diplomatic relations were established with Laos. China supported the agreement of Souvanna with the Pathet Lao. On October 7, 1961, it established a consulate in Phong Saly and after a month, a cultural delegation visited Laos. The Chinese military journal, *Kung-tso T' ung-hsun* mentioned that the US had supplied Phoumi 105 mm howitzers, M-24 tanks and Thai military personnel were training his troops.²⁴

The Pathet Lao-neutralist Government was short lived as Phoumi's forces marched towards Vientiane in December 1960. He became the Defense Minister in the new Government and Boun Oum was the Premier. The subsequent defeat of Phoumi's forces raised the possibility of American intervention. The Administration of John F. Kennedy (1961-1963) was confronted with the dilemma of intervening or not intervening. In an obvious warning to the Communist powers, the President ordered the Seventh Fleet to move into the Gulf of Thailand. At the SEATO Council meeting, it was declared that action might be taken unless the Pathet Lao agreed for a ceasefire.²⁵ In the press conference of March 23, 1961, Kennedy said that the US preferred a neutralized Laos, but would not hesitate to intervene if necessary.²⁶ In the National Security Council meeting the question of sending American troops was discussed. But the Bay of Pigs invasion on Cuba of April 17 had made Kennedy to remark, "If it hadn't been for Cuba, we might be about to intervene in Laos."²⁷ Fearing that the adversaries would think him weak, the task force in Okinawa was put on alert. The Commander-in-Chief of Pacific

Forces was ordered to move American combat brigades of 5,000 personnel each to north-east Thailand and South Vietnamese coast as "a threat to intervene in Laos."²⁸

Road To Peace

Attempts to bring an end to civil war were going on.²⁹ India as Chairperson of the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICC) sent a message to Britain and the Soviet Union (Co-chairpersons) proposing reactivation of the ICC.³⁰ It was agreed that an international conference would be convened in Geneva to end the crisis in Laos. The different factions in Laos were to observe ceasefire and send their representatives to Geneva. On May 16, 1961, the 14-nation conference began consisting the signatories of the 1954 Geneva Conference (Britain, Cambodia, China, France, Laos, Soviet Union, US and both the Vietnams), the members of the ICC, Thailand and Myanmar. The Soviet Union, US and China sponsored Souvanna, Vientiane Government and the Pathet Lao respectively. It took more than a year for final agreement and peace efforts were punctuated by hostilities. The problem of ceasefire provoked heated debates with charges and counter-charges. In late May and early June 1961, a battle began around Ban Padong, about 10 kms south of Plain of Jars. The Hmong tribes numbering about 9,000 were conducting guerilla operations against the Communists with help from the CIA chief of Vientiane.³¹ Ban Padong was captured by 5, 00 Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese soldiers. Much hue and cry was raised and the American delegation headed by Averell W. Harriman walked out of the conference, which was suspended for five days.

The situation improved after the Kennedy- Khrushchev meeting on June 3 and 4, 1961 in Vienna. It had a healthy effect on the course of events in Laos, albeit temporarily. Laos was the only area, on which there appeared some prospect of agreement in the summit meeting. Kennedy said:

*The only area which afforded some immediate, some prospect of accord was Laos. Both sides recognized the need to reduce the dangers in that situation. Both sided endorsed the concept of a neutral and independent Laos much in the manner of Burma or Cambodia. Of critical importance to the current conference on Laos in Geneva, both sides recognized the importance of an effective ceasefire.*³²

Until the three factions of Laos agreed to form a coalition Government and cessation of hostilities, a settlement in Geneva was not feasible. Souvanna, Souphanouvong and Boun signed a communiqué in Zurich on 22 June in this regard. The declarations of Zurich were not followed with appropriate action and each faction began to build up their strength with fresh supplies. While the delegates in Geneva were preparing modalities of an agreement, the skirmishes continued, snowballing to the serious crisis of Nam Tha in 1962.

Phoumi's strategy was to continue the hostilities so that he would retain American support. Even he had announced that the Chinese and Russian troops were active in the area. The US did not believe in these and in January 1962 suspended the cash grant of 4

million dollars so that Phoumi would yield.³³ The President had appealed personally to Phoumi to merge the RLG under a tripartite coalition led by Souvanna. The CIA handler of Phoumi also was transferred from Laos. In February, the US stopped the salary money that Phoumi used to pay every month to his army. The American pressure was to bring Phoumi to agree for a coalition Government.³⁴ The cutting off aid went on for four months. But, the supply of military equipment continued, lest the Pathet Lao along with the neutralists take a stronger position.

Nam Tha, a strong hold of Phoumi was situated about 10 kms from the Chinese border and 125 kms from Thai border. It was used as a base for probing into the Pathet Lao territory and the hostilities intensified by end of April 1962. It was believed that the CIA had prodded Phoumi to reinforce Nam Tha garrison. He believed that there would be policy difference in the US Administration as in 1960 and Phoumi could count on support of the CIA and Pentagon in opposing a coalition Government.³⁵ On May 6 Nam Tha fell into the hands of the Pathet Lao and Phoumi's troops along with the Commander-in-Chief of the RLA (Royal Lao Army) crossed to Thailand. Alarmed by the events in Laos, Thailand had sent its troops to Nam province bordering Nam Tha. The Thai concern was motivated by security and anti-Communism.³⁶ It wanted a friendly regime in Laos. Marshal Sarti Thanarat (1909–1963), the Thai Premier's hostility towards Pathet Lao was motivated by Communist phobia and he shared this with his close relative Phoumi. In the north-eastern Thailand, Communist insurgency had been on increase with support from other side of the border along with China and North Vietnam.³⁷ Both the US and Thailand signed the Rusk-Thanat agreement on March 6, 1962, which spelled out that obligations under SEATO were "individual as well as collective."³⁸ The US declared unilateral defense guarantee and military assistance to Thailand was doubled.

Alarmed at the Nam Tha developments, the US took measures to deter the Communists for further advances. There were different opinions in the American administration regarding the course of events to be followed. The Pentagon, keen on preventing a coalition Government urged an all-out effort including a nuclear attack on China.³⁹ The State Department representing a political line advocated for a limited military intervention. The Seventh Fleet moved into the Gulf of Thailand on 12 May and two days afterwards, 1,000 American soldiers moved to Udorn situated about 50 kms from Lao border. The US announced dispatch of 5,000 troops to Thailand. Australia, Britain and New Zealand also sent token forces. Kennedy in a press conference of 17 May said that the purpose of sending troops was for ensuring Thailand's territorial integrity.⁴⁰ The Pathet Lao troops did not violate ceasefire and the American soldiers did not cross the Mekong river. The crisis thus faded.

On June 7, 1962, talks were resumed between the Lao leaders once again on the Plain of Jars. A coalition Government was to be formed with Souvanna as the Premier. Phoumi and Souphanouvong were to be Deputy Prime ministers. The delegates of Geneva Conference presented on 23 July two documents on Laos; a Declaration on the neutrality of Laos and a Protocol to it.⁴¹ The signatories pledged that they would not indulge in any

manner affecting the sovereignty, independence, neutrality and territorial integrity of Laos. The introduction of foreign troops was prohibited and the ICC would supervise the ceasefire. The 9 July statement of the Lao coalition Government, pertaining to *penkang* or neutrality was also included in the Geneva Accords. It had proclaimed establishment of diplomatic relations with all countries and adherence to five principles of peaceful co-existence.

Strategic Interest of Actors

The main participants of the crisis in Laos were on the brink of getting involved in a war, but they opted for a compromise. Behind the de-escalation, the considerations of major actors were obvious. By 1962, the strategic considerations of the Soviet Union and China over Laos were divergent. Whereas Moscow visualized Laos in the context of its relations with the US, China was following a policy of struggle and it was not yet talking of a policy of detente with the US. Khrushchev had strongly opposed a militant line on Indochina. In his speech of January 6, 1961, on *wars of national Liberation*, the Soviet leader had said that the Soviet Union was for peaceful co-existence.⁴² The Communist countries would support national liberation, but should not internationalize it. In the crisis of Nam Tha, the Soviet Union did not interfere. It also asked the Pathet Lao to show a more flexible attitude for forming a coalition Government. The Soviet Union was interested more in the affairs of Europe. Its policy in Laos was to strengthen the bargaining position in Europe vis-à-vis the US. The limited arms supply to Pathet Lao-neutralist alliance in 1960-1961 was more of an exception than a rule as will be evident from the Soviet policy after 1962.

China supported the Pathet Lao as the victory of rightists would mean another pro-US Government in its southern border. Suspicious of the Soviet Union's policy of peaceful coexistence and its reluctance to provide nuclear weapons, China was very much concerned about American military bases in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and the Philippines. Yet, it could not risk a war with the US. The weakness in economic front after the Great Leap Forward movement was another constraint. Hence, it was suggesting a dual policy in Laos; local military operations coupled with political negotiations. Going to the Geneva conference would be advantageous for it as Laos would be neutralized. The protective umbrella of SEATO also would be removed from Laos. Following the dual revolutionary tactics, 'Nam Tha' had to be followed by political negotiations. The military strategy had to be guided by political thinking in the People's War.

Laos was not worth risking a global war for the US and it went to the Geneva Conference after its show of force in Nam Tha crisis had become successful. The Communists responded to the ceasefire. Kennedy applied coercive diplomacy so as to halt the Pathet Lao advance. This type of diplomacy points towards "focusing enemy's will rather than upon negating his capabilities."⁴³ The US wanted to gain time so that in future anti-Communist forces would be in a more advantageous position. As Hilsman, the Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research in

administration of Kennedy had admitted: “We understood perfectly well that (it) was the starting gun...If we had used negotiations...as an excuse to withdraw from Laos...we in effect would have been turning it over to the communists.”⁴⁴ The application of show of force was to stall an outright victory for the Pathet Lao. The US favored a political solution, at least for the time being. The Kennedy- Khrushchev meeting in Vienna was another factor for a compromise solution. The other reasons that might have influenced decision of Kennedy were: i) The SEATO members were not unanimous in an outright intervention in Laos, ii) The American embassy, especially its ambassador, Brown, believed that a compromise formula was the best course of option and (iii) Increase in Viet Cong activities in South Vietnam required more troops and attention of the US.

North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao also agreed for de-escalating the crisis. Hanoi had seen that the Pathet Lao had increased its strength as compared to the time of Geneva Conference of 1954; numerically and area wise. It had become easier to send cadres to South Vietnam through north eastern provinces of Laos, which were controlled by the Pathet Lao. The landing of American troops in Thailand, Soviet pressure, political gain in a conference table and lack of resources to occupy whole of Laos were factors responsible for coming to Geneva talks. The Pathet Lao had changed its tactics from armed insurrection to national front as it did at the time of Geneva conference of 1954 and 1956-1957 Vientiane agreements.

Two basic and three preliminary conditions are to be present for a compromise settlement⁴⁵ and all these were there in the Lao situation of 1960-1962.⁴⁶ The basic conditions are stalemate and redistribution of aims. Stalemate in the battlefield was restored, when the US sent its troops in Nam Tha crisis and the Pathet Lao agreed to negotiate. It was to the middle faction of neutralists that both the rightists and Communists made concessions. Souvanna was acceptable to both and distribution of portfolios was easier. The three basic conditions are identity of parties, duration of conflict and existence of contact between the parties. In Lao scenario, identity of parties was well known. The conflict between the rightists and Pathet Lao was of long duration and quick victory was unlikely. The channel of communication was open due to meeting of the factions and presence of ICC.

Breaking of Peace

The coalition Government that was formed after the Geneva Accords of 1962 functioned smoothly in the beginning with the three factions: left, neutrals and the right cooperating with each other. However, the troika or three-pronged administrative structure did not last long. Souvanna Phouma became Premier with charge of defense. Souphanouvong and Phoumi Nosavan, both the Deputy Premiers represented the left and rightist groups respectively. All decisions of the Government would be taken in accordance with unanimity rule. Such an arrangement was doomed from the beginning. The wrangling over distribution of foreign aid began and each side endeavored to channel maximum to its own faction. Each also kept control of its military forces. Mutual suspicion of among three sides prevented the smooth functioning of the Government. There was also a split

in the neutralist camp after a series of assassinations in the capital Vientiane. In politics of Laos henceforth witnessed two strands, the rightists and leftists with neutralist joining either faction. Though Souvanna wanted national reconciliation, he did not want that Pathet Lao should play a dominant role. He gradually drifted away from the Pathet Lao and moved towards right. The military Generals began to assume real power and he remained a 'symbolic' figure. By 1964, three pronged administrative structure had become defunct and situation in Laos returned to pre- 1962 situation. The tripartite meeting of Souvanna, Souphanouvong and Phoumi Nosavan in September 1964 at Paris failed. Hostilities were resumed and some of the signatories of the Geneva Accords observed the provisions by violating it. Laos was becoming a 'side show' of the Vietnam War. The two major actors, the US and North Vietnam followed policy in Laos keeping in mind the compulsions of the War.

The United States involvement began to increase in Laos. Reconnaissance flights were carried out over Pathet Lao strongholds by RF-10001 Voodoo Jets. To operate military aid, a Requirements Office was secretly opened within the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).⁴⁷ As commented by Senator Stuart Symington in October 1969, the clandestine moves of the US administration were not known even to the American Congress.⁴⁸ The Vietnamese situation was getting tense with US administration's full support to the regime of Saigon. After the Tonkin incident of 1964, the USA was deeply involved in the quagmire of the worst war in history. Its policy in Laos became a part of strategy to prevent the collapse of the regime in South Vietnam. The new American President Lyndon B. Johnson (1908-73), reaffirmed the Vietnam policy of Kennedy in his statement of November 26, 1963. As the Pentagon Papers had revealed, there were plans:

*For clandestine operations by the GVN (Government of South Vietnam) against the North and also for operations up to 50 kilometers in Laos; and as a justification for such measures, State was directed to develop a strong, documented case to demonstrate the world the degree to which the Viet Cong is controlled, sustained and supplied from Hanoi, through Laos and other channels.*⁴⁹

The clandestine operations were placed under direct military command of the US in Saigon. The covert operations were aimed at warning and harassing North Vietnam so as to reduce its capability to "utilize the Lao Panhandle for reinforcing the Viet Cong in south Vietnam and to cope with PL/VM (Pathet Lao/Viet Minh) presence in Laos."⁵⁰ The covert military operations against North Vietnam had the objective of checking advances by the Pathet Lao and Vietcong. The United States was thinking in terms of domino theory. It is evident from the memorandum of Defense Secretary, Robert S. McNamara (1961-1968) to the President on 16 May 1964:

Unless we can achieve this objective (independent, non-Communist South Vietnam) in South Vietnam, almost all of Southeast Asia will probably fall under Communist dominance.....Even the Philippines would become shaky,

*and the threat to India to the west, Australia and New Zealand to the south, and Taiwan and Korea, and Japan to the north and east would be greatly increased.*⁵¹

In this grand American strategy, the sole aim was to check communist advance. Survival of South Vietnam was primary consideration and Laos was increasingly becoming involved. The covert operation that began on 1 February 1964 against North Vietnam had the motive of compelling Hanoi to ask Pathet Lao and Viet Cong to stop hostilities. This program code-named. Operation Plan 34A resulted in sending U-2 spy planes and commando raid to North Vietnam. The second part of the covert war was air operation in Laos to restrict the use of Lao territory to reinforce the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. The Ho Chi Minh trail passing through Laos was the main supply route for North Vietnam to send convoys carrying supplies to Viet Cong in the South Vietnam. There was bombing of southeastern Laos along the trail. The air war in Laos was stepped up in 1965, but the beginning had been made in 1964. The three American ambassadors to Bangkok, Saigon and Vientiane along with the Deputy of 7th Air Force, and Commander-in-Chief, Pacific began to meet periodically to discuss course of action. The US also was opposed to a negotiated settlement at this time. William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs wrote that the US would oppose conference on Vietnam and Laos and solution required military pressures.⁵² The problem of South Vietnam was uppermost in the thinking of US administration. The US did not want to give the impression that it was withdrawing from Indochina through conference route. Maxwell D. Taylor, the ambassador in Saigon had cabled the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk (1961 and 1969) on August 9, 1964, about the disadvantages of withdrawing from Laos, "... (it) would look like evidence that US is seeking to take advantage of any slight improvement in non-Communist position as excuse for extricating itself from Indochina via conference route. This would give strength to probably pro-Gaullist contention that GVN (Government of South Vietnam) should think about following Laotian example by seeking negotiated solution..."⁵³ It is obvious that Laos was becoming a sideshow in the Vietnam war and Rusk rightly said that after 1963, Laos became a 'wart on the hog of Vietnam'.⁵⁴

The US air strikes that had started in 1964 greatly increased in subsequent years. There were more air strikes over northern Laos due to suspension of bombing over North Vietnam in later part of 1965 and beginning of 1966.⁵⁵ A new plan called SLAM (Seek, locate, annihilate and monitor) by B-52 bombers was envisaged. Navigational stations were secretly set up in Laos for guiding the planes bombing North Vietnam. The CIA supported Hmongs were protecting the Pho Pha Thi station, which was about 25 kilometers from North Vietnam border. In February 1968, the Pathet Lao captured the base and nineteen Americans were killed. The domestic dissent in the US towards the Vietnam War was gathering momentum and on 31 March 1968 there was a partial bombing halt of North Vietnam to the north of 20th parallel. The planes were diverted to Laos. The bombing was accelerated after bombing halt over North Vietnam on 31 October 1968. Between May 1964 and January 1969, the United States had delivered 410, 000 tons of bombs into Laos and the bomber sortie was 52 per day in December 1968. The aircrafts were using napalm and defoliants sometimes.⁵⁶ The per capita cost of

bombing was 560 US dollars; where as the per capita income of Laos was 66 US dollars.⁵⁷ The bombing was characterized by heavy civilian toll and was responsible for creating a large number of refugees. Senator Edward M Kennedy, Chairman of the Refugee Subcommittee, estimated that the bombing in Laos was responsible for creating about 70% of the refugees.⁵⁸ The sustained bombing did not halt the Pathet Lao military advance. As indiscriminate bombing destroyed the regular sources of supply and rice production, the Pathet Lao turned more towards the North Vietnamese. The US air support to the army of RLG brought forth greater troop commitment by North Vietnam in Laos. Thus, the bombing had the opposite result even from the American viewpoint.

The North Vietnamese did not pull out all their troops after the Geneva Accords of 1962 and about 6,000 North Vietnamese army personnel remained in Laos.⁵⁹ Taking into account the mountainous terrain along the Lao-North Vietnamese border, it was not possible to know the exact number of North Vietnamese troops that remained in Laos after 1962. With the motive of unification of both the Vietnams, Hanoi gave unstinted support to the Pathet Lao by sending arms, ammunitions and troops. The Pathet Lao-controlled areas in northeastern Laos were of immense importance to North Vietnam for infiltration to the South. The Viet Minh cadres had returned along the Ho Chi Minh trail in 1959 to take part in fighting against the Diem Government in South Vietnam. After the regular bombing of North Vietnam and sending of American ground troops to South Vietnam, there was infiltration of North Vietnamese troops and supplies along the trail. The North Vietnamese troops in Laos manning the trail were also performing the advisory role for the Pathet Lao Army. In northern Laos, both fought against the Royal Lao Army (RLA). On 6 March 1970, the US President Richard M. Nixon said about the growing number troops: around mid-1967 it was 33,000, which increased up to 67,000 in 1970.⁶⁰ The US military attaché at Vientiane gave the figure for 1970 as 48,000.⁶¹ The RAND corporation authors mentioned that there were about 40,000 North Vietnamese military men serving in Laos.⁶² Therefore, in all probability, the number of troops serving in Laos would be around 45,000 to 50,000.⁶³ There were also small settlements of North Vietnamese along the Lao- North Vietnam border area. Some soldiers of North Vietnam disabled in the war were settling along this region. The ethnographic factor of same tribal groups living in both the sides of border was a contributing factor to this. One of the reasons for North Vietnamese involvement in Laos was concern for its security. Hanoi did not want a hostile regime on its western flank. One Vietnamese professor told that Laos and Vietnam were like lip and teeth, 'if you open the lip, the teeth will suffer'.⁶⁴ The unification of both the Vietnams had long since remained the primary objective in the minds of Hanoi since 1956. Helping the Pathet Lao very well fitted into that strategy. The Prime Minister of Laos said, "For more than twenty years that country (North Vietnam) ...considered the kingdom of Laos as a natural area of expansion for its political and ideological ambitions... the Vietnam war also extends to Laos, and that this has been the case for the past twenty years, and it is escalating on a daily basis..."⁶⁵

Unlike the North Vietnamese and even Chinese, the Russians did not have much influence over the Pathet Lao. It recognized the Government of Souvanna as *de jure* one. The Soviet Union provided diplomatic support to the Pathet Lao so that it could not be

blamed for neglecting a Communist movement. China had established an Economic and Cultural Mission at Khang Khay. It played a more active role by supplying directly to the Pathet Lao materials through north-western part of Laos. The Chinese built roads in along the Lao-Chinese border and connected it to places like Phong Saly, Muong Khoua and Muong Sai. In the road building activity, there were about 6,000 Chinese out of which 2,000 were armed.⁶⁶ Neither the US strafed these areas, nor the Chinese anti-aircraft fired at the American planes. China branded Souvanna as a “tool” of the US Government. It also blamed the Soviet Union for collaborating with the US against the Communist forces in Laos. The Pathet Lao faced with American involvement and an equivocal Russian attitude, seemed to move closer to China than Russia.⁶⁷

Escalation of Conflict

From 1968, the war in Laos escalated in a big way. There was emphasis on ground war culminating in the attack of southern Laos in 1971 by South Vietnam. The increased bombing and the ground war was prerequisite for the success of Nixon doctrine. Domestic dissent in the US was increasing over the Vietnam War. The Nixon doctrine meant that the United States would honor its treaty commitments, give military and economic aid, and the ally of US would “assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower (i.e., essentially, ground troops) for its defense”.⁶⁸ In between 1969 and 1973, both the RLG and Pathet Lao tried to gain quick victories. With the deteriorating situation South Vietnam and the events of Cambodia in 1970, commitment to their respective Lao allies by the US and North Vietnam increased. Both made use of Laos to further their objectives Vietnam, one trying to unify the other part of the country and the other bent upon preventing it. In spite of American bombing, the Pathet Lao gained victories and their territorial control of Laos was increasing. Xieng Khouang, and Muong Soui fell to the Pathet Lao. Despite saturation bombing by B-52 bombers, they captured the Plain of Jars in 1970. Nearly 50 battalions of Hmong troops along with Thai irregulars and American advisers retreated from the Plain Xieng Khouang area.⁶⁹ The coup by General Lon Nol on 18 March 1970 added a new dimension to the Vietnam War. On 21 April, the United Indochinese Front was established. The summit conference three days afterwards in southern China was attended by Pham Van Dong representing North Vietnam, Norodom Sihanouk as head of National United front of Cambodia, Souphanouvong from the Pathet Lao and Nguyen Huu Tho as representative of the Provisional Government of South Vietnam. The delegates in a joint declaration called for unity in fighting against the United States.⁷⁰ The closing of Cambodian ports to ships coming from the Communist countries greatly hampered the delivery of war material to South Vietnam. The Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia were attacked. The South-Vietnam-US incursions into Cambodia in April-May 1970 had its repercussions in Laos. Southern Laos assumed much more importance in the Vietnam War. The Communist control was strengthened in Laos-South Vietnam-Cambodia border. The provincial capitals of Attapeu and Saravane in southern Laos came under domination of Communists, which facilitated supply to South Vietnam. These developments alarmed the United States and the South Vietnamese Government. As part of the Vietnam War, invasion of Laos had been a favorite theme in the minds of American policy maker. The

proposal of making raids in southern Laos to cut off the trail area did not materialize due to Tet offensive in 1968. In January and February, the Communists had launched major offensive against cities of South Vietnam. The objectives of the attack on Laos were to cut the trail and prevent North Vietnam from attacking northern areas of South Vietnam. Nixon in an obvious threat to North Vietnam told on 17 February 1971 that except the use of nuclear weapons there was no limit on the use of air power in Indochina.⁷¹ With 9,000 and 20,000 troops from the US and South Vietnam respectively, the campaign lasting for forty-five days resulted in a disastrous defeat of South Vietnam. The objective of cutting off the trail could not be achieved. The failure of South Vietnamese troops in spite of air support showed that it was not ready to take over a ground combat role from the United States. There was disillusionment over Nixon doctrine. The Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese advance could not be checked and by 1971. The Communists in Laos were in stronger position with the control of Som Thongm, Bolvens Plateau, Tha Teng, Paksong and Bam Nhik. There was fierce fighting in 1972. The RLG with the help of AC and US air support would attack the Pathet Lao stronghold only to be repulsed by it later. On 12 January 1972, the Pathet Lao captured the CIA base at Long Cheng. The military activity diminished towards late October, as there was progress in Paris Peace talks.

Attempts at Negotiations

The Paris Peace talks had started in 1968 to bring about a negotiated settlement to end the Vietnam War. The progress made at Paris had its impact on talks between the RLG and the Pathet Lao. Alternatively, when the progress at Paris stalled, the talks did not yield much and hostilities were resumed. A new escalation or severe bombing followed any proposal. There was exchange of letters in the initial stages between Souvanna and Souphanouvong in February 1969. The cessation of US bombing was the main question. Souvanna did not accede to it in the beginning. Later, he agreed for it in the trail area only. He made it conditional with the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops. Therefore, the halt of bombing over the trail became an obstacle for negotiations. The Ho Chi Minh trail was important for both the US and North Vietnam as it was linked to the Vietnam War. On 6 February 1970 Souvanna proposed neutralization of the Plain of Jars area and agreed to visit Hanoi for talks. However, in the same month there was massive US bombing on the Plain area to deny control of it to the Pathet Lao. The Pathet Lao had called for establishment of a coalition Government after elections, cessation of hostilities, end of US intervention and adherence to the provisions of Geneva Accords of 1962.⁷² But any talk for negotiations could not take place because of the coup in Cambodia. Another proposal by Souphahnouvong on 12 June 1970 calling for partial bombing halt by the US showed some prospect of starting negotiations. However, the talks could not proceed as both sides put conditions before talks. Bombing issue was an advantage in the hands of the RLG. Some of the rightist elements were viewing with concern to reopen negotiations by the Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma. The rightists welcomed the South Vietnamese attack against Laos in February 1971 without knowledge of Souvanna. Peace efforts were balked by this invasion of South Vietnamese and American ground troops. Nixon had called for widening peace in Indochina on 7 October 1970, but after four months, he had agreed to an incursion on a massive scale of

southern Laos. Another reason for not reaching any meaningful solution was the antagonistic role of the US embassy in Vientiane. The members of political section as opposed to the US ambassador G. McMurtrie Godley, were in favor of a lenient attitude towards the Pathet Lao. The head of the political section sent feelers that the US could agree to halt in bombing in return for a cease-fire, but he was transferred after two weeks.⁷³ In June 1971, the Pathet Lao demanded cessation of bombing as well as cease-fire for beginning of talks. The RLG did not agree to this and talks could not begin.

Laos Becomes Red

In the international sphere, the rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union on the one and, and the China and United States on the other hand, brought about a climate of understanding. This rapprochement led to the Paris Peace Agreements on Vietnam, and Laos did benefit from this. Agreements in international sphere reduced the level of conflict in Indochina. The United States began to disengage form Vietnam. In the beginning of 1972, the Pathet Lao reaffirmed the five-point peace proposal of March 1970. They were in commanding position as two-thirds of Lao territory was under their control. Souvanna agreed to the Pateht Lao proposal as basis for talks. The Paris Peace talks were progressing and this led to the beginning of first round of talks between the Pathet Lao and RLG on 17 October 1972. However, there was no progress due to breakdown of talks in Paris. Both the US and North Vietnam had agreed to sign an agreement on 31 October 1972. This did not materialize.⁷⁴ Finally the signing of Paris Peace agreements on Vietnam on 27 January 1973 accelerated the negotiation process in Laos. Article 20 of the Accords mentioned that signatories would “respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Cambodia and the 1962 Geneva agreements on Laos” and “undertake to refrain from using the territory of Cambodia and the territory of Laos to encroach on sovereignty and security of one another and other countries.”⁷⁵ It further stated that internal affairs of Cambodia and Laos would be settled without foreign intervention. North Vietnam agreed to pull out its troops from Laos. The United States wanted to stop bombing in Laos before the meeting of twelve-party conference on Vietnam at Paris from 26 February to 12 March 1973. It put pressure on Souvanna to sign an agreement and conveyed to the rightists that bombing would stop by 25 February 1973. The rightists knew that there would not be any improvement in its military position without help of American bombing. The Pathet Lao also was told by the North Vietnamese to agree for cease-fire. On 21 February 1973, an agreement on Restoring Peace and Achieving National Concord was signed.

The important provisions of the agreement were observation of cease-fire, withdrawal of foreign troops, establishment of a new Provisional Government of National Union (PGNU) and National Political Council of Political Council of Coalition, neutralization of royal capital of Luang Prbang and the city of Vientiane and establishment of a coalition commission for implementing the agreement.⁷⁶ Article 1 stipulated that the 1962 Geneva Accords should be respected by the Lao factions, the US, Thailand and other foreign powers. It also prohibited sending of troops and arms to Laos by foreign countries. The agreement was an outright victory for the Pathet Lao. It bore a

close similarity with their five-point proposal of 6 March 1970. The Pathet Lao demand that Souvanna and his neutralists would be called the “Vientiane Party” as they had merged with the rightists was agreed. The tripartite structure of 1962 Geneva Accords was not there. Even, in Article 1, the name of North Vietnam was absent, whereas mention of the United States and Thailand was there in observing neutrality of Laos. Luang Prabang and Vientiane were neutralized so that the Pathet Lao could station the troops.

The provisions of the agreement were violated as soon as it was signed. After two days of signing, the United States sent B-52 bombers over Paksong and Xieng Khouang. The pretext was the attack by North Vietnamese troops. Sporadic skirmishes were stalling the progress towards implementing the political provisions. The United States bombed Thatom Thavieng area on 16 and 17 April. North Vietnam continued supplying arms and ammunition to South Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia. However, conclusion of the Joint Communiqué on Paris agreements on 13 June 1973 between the United States and North Vietnam opened prospects for negotiations on Laos. The draft agreement concerning the political provision of 1973 agreement was signed on 14 September. The PGNU, another experiment in the coalition Government, was formed on 5 April 1974. The Pathet Lao was gradually assuming more power and making its presence felt in various spheres of activities. With control of four-fifths of the area and half the population, the Pathet Lao was going to tip the balance in its favor. As Laos was linked to the events in Vietnam, developments there had its repercussion in Laos. On 30 April 1975, communist forces entered the South Vietnamese capital Saigon. Both the Vietnams were reunited officially in January 1976. After the fall of South Vietnam, the Pathet Lao assumed effective control of Laos. The Government offices in provincial capitals were taken one by one. In November, the King Savang Vatthana (1907-1980) was persuaded by Souvanna and Souphanouvong to abdicate. The coalition government in Laos was dissolved and most of the rightist leaders fled to Thailand. On 2 December 1975, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (LPDR) was formed.

Conclusion

Foreign intervention aggravated the conflict in Laos and a solution was not in sight. The United States and North Vietnam were the two major interventionist powers in Laos and the Vietnam War involved them deeply in affairs of Laos. The containment of communism in the cold war period was the rationale behind the US involvement in Laos. With the escalation of Vietnam War, the American action in Laos was linked with its interest in Vietnam. The doctrine of Marxism-Leninism facilitated the Pathet Lao and North Vietnam coming close. Afterwards, Laos became an integral part of the North Vietnamese strategy to achieve the unification of both the Vietnams.

Both the United States and North Vietnam came into conflict, as they were committed to help their respective allies in Laos, and regarded the other’s action in Laos as harmful to their interest in South Vietnam. An agreement on Laos became contingent upon ending the war in Vietnam. The net result of outside intervention was prolongation of conflict in

Laos. The gulf between the internal factions in Laos widened, and the freedom of choice was restricted for the belligerents in Laos. The problem of Laos remained unsolved and there was de facto balkanization of the country. A solution to Lao conflict was in sight after the Geneva accords of 1962. However, the gradual linkage of the country with the Vietnam War made the solution of dependent upon the outcome of conflict in Vietnam. But, whole of Indochina became red after the end of Vietnam War.

NOTES

¹ Department of State Bulletin, 28 February 1955, p.332.

² Senate, Committee on Appropriation, Mutual Security Appropriation for 1955 (Washington, 1955), Hearings, Cong.83, Sess.2, 1954, p.305.

³ Patit Paban Mishra, *A Contemporary History of Laos*. (New Delhi: National Book Organization, 1999), p. 49.

⁴ General John A. Heintges, Chief of the PEO in between 1958 and 1961 called it as a similar organization like MAAG. See, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Military Cold War Education and Speech Review Politics, Hearings before the Special Preparedness Subcommittee, part 5, Cong. 87, Sess. 2, 1962 (Washington, 1962), p.2371. The American Senator Silvio O. Conte, who visited Laos in 1959, commented that the staffs of PEO were ex-marines and army men. House of Representative, Committee on Appropriations, Operations Appropriations for 1962, Cong. 87, Sess. 1, 1961 (Washington, 1961), p.589.

⁵ House of Representatives, Committee on Government Operations, U.S. Aid Operations in Laos, Seventh Report, Cong.86, Ses. 1, 1959 (Washington, 1959), pp. 45-46.

⁶ Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, 1967), p.115.

⁷ David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, *The Invisible Government* (New York, 1964), p.173.

⁸ Hilsman, n. 6, p.122.

⁹ For details pertaining to the formation of the Pathet Lao, See, Patit Paban Mishra, "The Pathet Lao Movement" (M.Phil. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, School of International Studies, New Delhi, 1974)

¹⁰ *20 Years of Lao People's Revolutionary Struggle* (Neo Lao Hak Sat Publications, n. p., 1966), p.11.

¹¹ Statement by the President Ho Chi Minh after the Geneva Conference (Hanoi, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1955), pp.3-7.

¹² The Pentagon Papers, as published by the New York Times (New York, 1971), p. 25.

¹³ Author's interview with Lt. Col. Chansamore Inthavong at Nong Khai refugee camp, Thailand, May 28, 1977.

¹⁴ Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao: Partners in the Struggle for Laos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p.92

¹⁵ Phoumi Vongvichit, *Laos and the Victorious Struggle of the Lao People against U.S. Neo-Colonialism* (NLHS publications, n.p., 1969), p.126

- ¹⁶ New York Times, September 12, 1960.
- ¹⁷ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace* (Garden City, 1965), p.608. He was the President of the US in between 1953 and 1961.
- ¹⁸ Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, 1965), p.303.
- ¹⁹ For the full text, see, Royal Institute of Internal Affairs, Document on International Affairs, 1959 (London, 1959), pp, 261-265.
- ²⁰ Lao Presse, November 25 and December 5, 1960
- ²¹ Hugh Toye, *Laos: Buffer State or Battleground* (London, 1968), p.159.
- ²² Department of State Bulletin (Washington, January 23, 1961), pp. 114-115.
- ²³ For details see, *Peking Review*, no.17, April 26, 1960, pp. 6-23.
- ²⁴ J. Chester Cheng, ed., *The Politics of Chinese Red Army* (Stanford, 1966), p.336.
- ²⁵ P.C. Phuankasem, *Thailand and SEATO* (Bangkok, 1972), p.34.
- ²⁶ Public Papers of the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, 1961 (Washington, 1962), pp, 213-218.
- ²⁸ Schlesinger Jr. n. 18, p.316
- ²⁹ The Pentagon Papers, n.12, p. 89.
- ³⁰ For details see, Mishra, n.3, pp, 71-75.
- ³¹ The ICC was formed after the Geneva Conference of 1954 to supervise the agreements. Poland and Canada were the two members.
- ³² The Pentagon Papers, n.12, pp, 134-135.
- ³³ Department of State Bulletin, June 26, 196, p.993. Khrushchev had told Kennedy in Vienna that the Soviet Union had “no desire to assume responsibility in remote geographical area.” See, Schlesinger, n.18, p.333.
- ³⁴ New York Times, January 16, 1961.
- ³⁵ Hariman said that the salary money was stopped as the Vientiane Government was not “negotiating in good faith for a coalition government.” See, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Foreign Assistance Act of 1962. Cong. 87, Sess. 2, 1962 (Washington, 1962), p.369.
- ³⁶ Hilsman, n. 6, p. 138.
- ³⁷ For details see, Mishra, n. 3, pp, 81-83.
- ³⁸ “Communist Insurgency in Thailand” (Unofficial Summary of the Government White Paper), *South-East Asian Spectrum*, vol.1 1, no. 4, July 1973, p.33. A separatist movement also was there in north-eastern Thailand, whose goal was creation of a neutral Laos.
- ³⁹ Department of State Bulletin, March 26, 1962, p.499.
- ⁴⁰ Hilsman, n. 6, p. 142.
- ⁴¹ Department of State, *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1962 (Washington, 1966), p. 1094.
- ⁴² For the text, see, UK, Central Office of Information, *Laos* (London, 1967), pp. 50-55.
- ⁴³ *Communism- Peace and Happiness for the Peoples*, January-September 1961 (Moscow, 1963), vol.1, pp. 389-391.
- ⁴⁴ Alexander L. George and others, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston, 1971), p. 18.

- ⁴⁵ Senate, Committee on Judiciary, Refugee Problem in South Vietnam and Laos. Cong. 89, Sess. 1, (Washington, 1965), p.328.
- ⁴⁶ George Modelski, "International Settlement of Internal War", in James N. Rosenau, ed., *International Civil Strife* (Princeton, 1964), p. 143.
- ⁴⁷ Martin E. Goldstein, *American Policy Toward Laos* (Cranbury, 1973), pp. 283-285.
- ⁴⁸ Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings before the Sub-committee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Kingdom of Laos, Cong 9, Sess 1, October 1969 (Washington, 1970), p.473.
- ⁴⁹ *ibid*, p.543.
- ⁵⁰ *The Pentagon Papers*, Senator Gravel Edition (Boston, 1972), vol. 3, p.548.
- ⁵¹ *ibid*, p.606.
- ⁵² *The Pentagon Papers*, n.12, p.278.
- ⁵³ *ibid*, p.295.
- ⁵⁴ *ibid*, p.347.
- ⁵⁵ Charle A. Stevenson, *The end of Nowhere, American policy Towards Laos since 1954* (Boston, 1972), p.180
- ⁵⁶ US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings before the Sub-committee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Kingdom of Laos, Cong 9, Sess 1, October 1969 (Washington, 1970), p.473.
- ⁵⁷ R. Littauer and N. Uphoff, eds, *The Air War in Indochina* (Boston, 1972), p.275 and p.281.
- ⁵⁸ Walt Haney, "The Pentagon Papers and the United States Involvement in Laos" in Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, eds., *The Pentagon Papers: Critical Essays*, Senator gravel edition (Boston, 1972), vol.5, p. 277.
- ⁵⁹ US Senate, Committee on Judiciary, Refugee and Civilian War Casualty Problems in Laos and Cambodia, Hearings, Cong.92, ses.2, 1970 (W Washington, 1972), p.24.
- ⁶⁰ *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* (Washington), vol. 6 March 1970, 323.
- ⁶¹ *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, n. 59, p.323.
- ⁶² Fred Branfman, " Presidential War in Laos: 1964-1970" in Nina S. Adams and Alfred W. McCoy, eds, *Laos: War and Revolution* (New York, 1970), p.269.
- ⁶³ Langer and Zasloff, n.14, p.171.
- ⁶⁴ Author's field trip in Laos, July 1977. Form interview of defectors form the Pathet Lao, the numbers ranged from forty to fifty thousand.
- ⁶⁵ Author's interview with Nguyen Van Thu at Hanoi, Faculty of History, Hanoi University, July 7, 1977.
- ⁶⁶ Roger M. Smith, ed., *South East Asia, Documents of Political Development and Change* (Ithaca, 1974), p.446.
- ⁶⁷ US Senate, n. 55, p. 372.
- ⁶⁸ Chae Jin Lee, "Chinese Communist Policy in Laos: 1954-1965" (Ph. D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1966), p. 293.
- ⁶⁹ Harold C. Hinton, *Three and Half Powers: The New Balance in Asia* (Bloomington, 1975), p.129.
- ⁷⁰ Quan Doi Nhan Dan, Hanoi, 15 June 1970, p.2, published in *Translations on South and East Asia*,

no.226, 8 September 1970, p.25.

⁷¹ Peking Review, vol. 13, 8 May 1970, p.5.

⁷² New York Times, 18 February 1971.

⁷³ Central Committee of the Neo Lao Hak Sat, *Nixon's Intensified Special War in Laos* (n.pl, 1972), pp.72-73.

⁷⁴ Stevenson, n., 54, p.237.

⁷⁵ For details see, Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (London, 1974), pp. 354ff.

⁷⁶ "Agreements on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam", published in *South Vietnam in struggle*, no.184, 29 January 1973, p.5.

⁷⁷ "Agreements on the Restoring Peace and Reconciliation in Laos", published in *Embassy of the USA, Fact on Foreign Aid to Laos* (USAID Mission to Laos, 1973), pp. 4-12.

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